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THURSDAY, APRIL 22, 2010

## What's Next For Co-op?

*By John Severance*

SOCORRO – About midway through the voting during the Socorro Electric Cooperative annual meeting at Finley Gym, trustee Luis Aguilar said, “It’s what the people want.”

Aguilar couldn’t have been more right.

The members’ voices were heard loud and clear Saturday night as in all, a record 621 people registered to vote at the meeting.

And there were many others there to pack the Finley Gym.

In fact, it was so packed the City of Socorro Fire Marshal was called in and he called for all those without orange wristbands to leave or the meeting would be shut down. After close to 200 people left and the exit areas were cleared, the meeting continued. Members were fed up with the status quo and they voted on bylaw changes that will change the way co-op is run.

Instead of 11 trustees, there will now be five.

Instead of two meetings a month, there will be one.

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Instead of unlimited compensation for trustees, there will be a limit for \$15,000 for the president and \$10,000 for trustees.

Those are the highlights, but members also voted for the SEC to abide by the Open Meetings Act and Inspection of Public Records Act. They also voted in bylaw changes to patronage capital, donations, fair elections, Enchantment Magazine and how the board conducts its business.

“I feel like a million bucks,” said resident Charlene West, who spearheaded the co-op reform group.

The vote for the number of trustees set the tone for the night. With a show of hands, 388 members voted to limit the number of trustees to five while 124 requested the status quo of 11. Nineteen people voted for seven trustees and four voted for nine. It wasn’t all about the reform group either.

Before the vote, trustee Charlie Wagner addressed the crowd and he was greeted by a number of catcalls and boos from the majority of the members.

Lorraine Woodard, a Socorro resident, walked up to Wagner when he was talking and grabbed the microphone and said, “This is a members’ meeting. This is not about you anymore. Please sit down and let us get down to business.”

And the members did exactly that.

“Democracy prevailed,” said new trustee Donald Wolberg. “It was not tidy. But everything was on the ballot and it was up to the members to choose.”



The big question, though, is when and how will these changes be implemented. SEC attorney Dennis Francish, who

(20)

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conducted the meeting, told those present that the measures would not be adopted for another year because that is the next time members could approve the minutes of the meeting.

Richard Epstein, a member of the

reform group, made a motion for the members to meet on June 5 to approve the minutes. But SEC bylaws state that a special meeting can only be called by the president or three trustees.

On Monday, however, Wagner wrote a letter to co-op president Paul Bustamante and Francish, requesting the propositions go into effect immediately..

In it he wrote, “The Chairman stated that none of these bylaws go into effect until the next meeting when the minutes of this meeting are approved. This is incorrect. The SEC Bylaws give no provision for when bylaw amendments go into effect. Section III Article 13 Conduct of Meetings states: “At all meetings of the members, of the Board of trustees, and any committees thereof, meeting procedures, except as provided by law or Articles of Incorporation, shall follow the parliamentary guidelines set forth in Robert’s Rules of Order”. Therefore I quote Robert’s Rule of Order Newly Revised, 10th Edition, Page 578, Lines 21-24 “Time at Which a Bylaw Amendment Takes Effect - An amendment to the bylaws goes into effect immediately upon its adoption unless the motion to adopt specifies another time for its becoming effective...”

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Then late Monday night, Francish emailed Wagner, saying he was mistaken and that the propositions do go into effective immediately.

A special meeting was called by the trustees for Friday at 5:30 p.m. to discuss and implement the new resolutions.

*Pictured: SEC Trustee Dave Wade (right) sits with County Commissioner Philip Anaya at the annual meeting Saturday at Finley Gym.*

*Photo by John Severance*



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